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**MISSOURI LEADS NATION IN REDUCING PRISON POPULATIONS
WITH DOUBLE BARREL-ATTACK ON RECIDIVISM**

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. – In contrast to the national trend, Missouri is the only state in the country with a decreasing prison population for the third semiannual count in a row, according to the federal Bureau of Justice Statistics. The bureau is part of the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs.

The bureau reported this month that Missouri was one of eight states with a decrease in its inmate prison population at midyear 2007. Missouri is the only state that has sustained a decrease through the last three reporting periods. Missouri's prison population decreased 2.9 percent in fiscal 2006, 2.1 percent in 2006 and 0.7 percent in fiscal 2007. The report also noted the overall U.S. prison population continued to increase over the last three reporting periods, by 2.8 percent in fiscal 2006, 2.8 percent in 2006 and 1.6 percent in fiscal 2007.

"Missouri's success is the result of a double-barreled attack on recidivism that the Department of Corrections and the Sentencing Advisory Commission launched in 2005," said Michael A. Wolff, judge of the Supreme Court of Missouri and chairman of the Missouri Sentencing Advisory Commission.

The first barrel is that probation officers began using enhanced sentencing assessment reports in November 2005 that provide judges with focused information about an individual offender's risk factors and recommended strategies for supervising and managing offenders, Wolff said.

The department developed effective community supervision strategies and community-based programs for less-dangerous offenders. Its data show that lower recidivism results when judges follow the sentencing commission's recommendations.

The second barrel is a program that improves the transition from prison back to the community. This program, called the Missouri reentry process, assists inmates with their transition to life outside of prison and, therefore, also has aided in decreasing recidivism rates statewide. Since the intensified program began in July 2005, the recidivism rate 12 months after release for inmates who participated in

the program was 24 percent – or 11 percent lower than the 35-percent recidivism rate for offenders who did not participate, according to the department's data.

"Because recidivism is a threat to public safety and a burden on taxpayers, it's crucial for the department to continue to enhance our efforts to assist offenders to become successful," Director of Corrections Larry Crawford said. "I take pride in the progress of the Missouri reentry process and am committed to this philosophical change in the way we do business.

"Once this system was put into practice, we have seen a steady downward slope of both prison populations and incidents of recidivism," Crawford added.

There are about 30,000 inmates in Missouri's prisons.

Kansas, Louisiana and Tennessee had declining prison populations in two of the last three semi-annual population reports, and 17 other states reported one decline in prison population in the last three semi-annual population reports. The Bureau of Justice Statistics gathers prison population data every six months and its state-to-state comparisons are accurate, though the reported data are nearly a year old when they are published. The complete report is available at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/welcome.html>.

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